

HOUSE RESOLUTION 351

By Smith

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor the life of Dr. Mary Edwards Walker (1832-1919).

WHEREAS, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker was born on November 6, 1832, in Syracuse, New York, to parents who advocated equality in family roles and societal reforms; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walker was a graduate of New York's Free School of Owego, Falley Seminary, and the coeducational Syracuse Medical School, where, in 1855, she became one of the first women in the United States to earn a medical degree; and

WHEREAS, at the onset of the Civil War, Dr. Mary Walker applied for an appointment as a military surgeon but was rejected by Secretary of War Simon Cameron; and

WHEREAS, refusing to be sidelined from service, Dr. Walker volunteered in Washington, D.C., hospitals, and in late 1862, she traveled to Warrenton, Virginia, where she assisted in the care and transport of wounded soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Mary Walker traveled to Chattanooga the following year, as she sought additional opportunities to serve the Union Army, caring for wounded soldiers in local churches that had been converted to makeshift hospitals; and

WHEREAS, U.S. General George Thomas, known as the Rock of Chickamauga, was so impressed with Dr. Walker's medical skills that on March 14, 1864, he assigned her as a contract surgeon to the 52nd Ohio Volunteers with a monthly salary of eighty dollars; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walker was the only woman to obtain such a position during the Civil War; during her time of service for the war effort, she treated soldiers and civilians in the countryside while engaging in spying for Union forces; and

WHEREAS, on November 11, 1865, President Andrew Johnson awarded Dr. Mary Walker the Medal of Honor for her service to the nation; however, her medal was rescinded in

1917 because she had served as a civilian contractor rather than a member of the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, undaunted, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker refused to surrender her medal and wore it proudly until her death in 1919; and

WHEREAS, sixty years after her Medal of Honor was rescinded, President Jimmy Carter restored Dr. Walker's award on June 10, 1977; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we recognize and honor the life and accomplishments of Dr. Mary Edwards Walker (1832-1919), one of the first women to earn a medical degree in the United States and a Medal of Honor recipient for her efforts on behalf of the Union Army during the Civil War.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.